

Amendments to the Claims

Please replace the prior version of the claims with the following claims:

1. (Currently amended) A loose, particulate material [consisting of] comprising silica sand grains coated with an elastomeric coating material, wherein the coating material comprises a thermoplastic polymer having a melt index of 20-40 g/10 min and Shore A hardness of 40-90.
2. (Currently amended) A material according to claim 1, wherein the coating material [constitutes] comprises 2-8% by weight of the silica sand[, preferably 4-6% by weight].
3. (Currently amended) A material according to claim 1 [or 2], wherein the [thermoplastic polymer] coating material comprises [2-8% by weight of the silica sand, preferably] 4-6% by weight silica.
4. (Currently amended) A material according to [any of claims 1-3] claim 1, wherein the silica sand grains are of an overall diameter in the range of 0.1 mm to 2 mm[, preferably in the range of 0.2 mm to 1.5 mm, and most preferred in the range of 0.4 mm to 0.9 mm].
5. (Currently amended) A material according to [any of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein the melt index is 25-35 g/10 min.
6. (Currently amended) A material according to [any of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein the Shore A hardness is 50-80[, preferably 60-75].
7. (Currently amended) A material according to [any of the preceding claims] claim 1, further comprising a coupling agent provided between the silica sand grains and the elastomeric coating material, so as to improve the binding between the grain and the coating material.
8. (Original) A material according to claim 7, wherein said coupling agent is selected from the group consisting of

bifunctional silane comprising a reactive amino group and a hydrolyzable inorganic triethoxysilyl group,

terpolymer comprising glycidyl methacrylate (GMA) groups, and

terpolymer comprising maleic anhydride (MAH) groups.

9. (Currently amended) A method of producing a loose, particulate, coated bulk material, comprising the steps of

[heating a portion of silica sand to a temperature within the range of 200°C to 300°C,

placing said portion of sand in a mixer comprising mixing means,

adding a portion of] mixing a thermoplastic polymer [to the content of the mixer under continued operation of the mixing means,] with silica sand heated to a temperature between about 200-300°C,

adding a predetermined amount of water to the [content of the mixer under continued operation of the mixing means, and] mixture so formed with continued mixing, and

directing [an airflow] air through the [content of the mixer] mixture so as to lower [the] its temperature [thereof].

10. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 9, wherein airflow is continued until the temperature of the [content of the mixer] mixture is below 80°C[, preferably below 60°C].

11. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 9 [or 10], wherein the predetermined amount of water is 3 to 15% by weight of the sand[, preferably 5 to 10% by weight of the sand].

12. (Currently amended) A method according to [any of] claim[s] 9[to 11], wherein the thermoplastic polymer has a melt index of 20-40 g/10 min and Shore A hardness of 40-90.

13. (Currently amended) A method according to [any of] claim[s] 9[to 12], wherein the thermoplastic polymer comprises 2-8% by weight of the silica sand[, preferably 4-6% by weight].

14. (Currently amended) A method according to [any of] claim[s] 9[-13], wherein the silica sand grains are of an overall diameter in the range of 0.1 mm to 2 mm[, preferably in the range of 0.2 mm to 1.5 mm, and most preferred in the range of 0.4 mm to 0.9 mm].

15. (Currently amended) A method according to [any of] claim[s] 9[-14], wherein the melt index is 25-35 g/10 min.

16. (Currently amended) A method according to [any of] claim[s] 9[-15], wherein the Shore A hardness is 50-80[, preferably 60-75].

17. (Currently amended) A method according to [any of] claim[s] 9[-16], wherein a coupling agent is added to the [mixer] sand prior to adding the thermoplastic polymer, [so as to provide a layer of the coupling agent on the surface of the silica sand grains before the thermoplastic polymer is added to the content of the mixer,] thereby improving the [binding] bond between the grain and the thermoplastic polymer.

18. (Original) A method according to claim 17, wherein said coupling agent is selected from the group consisting of

bifunctional silane comprising a reactive amino group and a hydrolyzable inorganic triethoxysilyl group,

terpolymer comprising glycidyl methacrylate (GMA) groups, and

terpolymer comprising maleic anhydride (MAH) groups.

19. (Currently amended) A sports surface comprising a loose, particulate material according to [any of] claim[s] 1[-8].

20. (Original) A sports surface according to claim 19, further comprising a pile fabric which is at least partly submerged in a layer of said loose particulate material.

21-22. (Cancelled)